

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Combining Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security

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Biotechnology

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Climate Change

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Report Highlights:

U.S. and French stakeholders exchanged views on ways to combine sustainable agriculture and food security in a seminar organized in the American Embassy in Paris, France, on September 24, 2010. U.S. and French regulators and farmers representatives expressed their perspectives and actions conducted in their own countries and their approach to developing countries on a common issue : how to continue to feed a growing population while protecting the environment, in their own countries and their perspectives for developing countries.

General Information:

On September 24, USDA/Foreign Agricultural Service and Public Affairs co-organized a seminar entitled “Combining Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security”. The objective of the seminar was to share the U.S. and France’s approaches to a common issue : how to continue to feed a growing population while protecting the environment, in their own countries and their perspectives for developing countries. The conference attracted an audience of approximately 60 people, including agricultural media, researchers, the food, agrochemical, and seed industries, farmers unions, and foreign Embassies mainly from African countries.

Among the speakers, policy makers included Dr. Roger Beachy, Director of USDA/National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA), and Emmanuelle Soubeyran, Director of the Service of Prevention of safety risks in primary production, in the French Ministry of Agriculture’s Food Directorate. French and developing countries farmers’ voice was Gerard Renouard, member of the board of the Directors of the leading French farmers union and President of the French Farmers and International Development (AFDI) association. Finally, the speaker for was developing countries was Bernard Bachelier, Director of the FARM foundation, involved in agricultural and economic development actions in a number of subsaharan African countries.

All speakers agreed that innovation is indispensable for farmers to meet the objectives of sustainability and food security, both in developing and developed countries. Biotechnology was the main innovation example provided by Dr. Beachy, as a tool to reduce chemical use and water demand, and to increase nitrogen use efficiency. The main innovation source indicated by Ms. Soubeyran to reduce pesticide use while maintaining productivity was seed technology (including genetic engineering) and modern and sustainable agronomical practices. Mr. Renouard was on the same line, and insisted more on the importance of the dissemination of information and education of the farmers, so that they can implement new research findings in their everyday practices. Finally, Mr. Bachelier insisted that the top priority for African countries is to increase productivity to secure their own food security, a higher priority than environmentally friendly practices. He said this can be only be achieved with better price anticipation tools and farming intensification, e.g. with chemical use and biotech crop production.

For more information, see USDA/FAS Paris website at <http://www.usda-france.fr/food-security.htm> including full speakers presentations. Also, see Dr. Beachy’s video interview by the largest French agricultural weekly magazine La France Agricole.